

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

Capitalism, which has included the colonial village into its system of taxation and trade apparatus and which has overturned capitalist relations (for instance the destruction of the village Commune) does not thereby liberate the peasants from the yoke of pre-capitalist forms of bondage and exploitation, but only gives the latter a monetary expression (feudal services and rent in kind are generally replaced by money taxes, and so on), which still more increases the suffering of the peasantry. To the "assistance" of the peasants in their miserable position comes the usurer, robbing them and under certain conditions (e. g., in some localities of India and China) even creating an hereditary slavery based on their indebtedness.

Notwithstanding the great variety of agrarian relationships in different colonial countries, and even in different parts of one and the same country, the poverty-stricken position of the peasant masses is almost everywhere the same. Partly owing to unequal exchange, and partly to direct exploitation, the peasants in these countries are not in a position to raise the technical or organisational level of their economy. The productivity of their labour, as also the demand for it, is falling.

The pauperisation of the peasantry in these countries is a general phenomenon. In India, China, and Indonesia, the pauperisation of the peasantry has reached such a height that, at the present time, the most characteristic figure in the village is the poor peasant, almost or entirely deprived of land and not infrequently suffering from starvation. Big land-ownership is here hardly connected in any way with large-scale agriculture, but serves only as a means for extorting rents from the peasants. There is frequently to be found a hierarchy of many stages, consisting of landlords and sub-landlords, parasitic intermediate links between the labouring cultivator and the big landowner (amindar) or the State.

The ancient systems of artificial irrigation, which in these countries is [are] of great importance for agriculture, thanks to the interference of imperialism first of all fell into decay, and when later they were re-established on a capitalist basis, then they were found to be too dear for the peasants to make use of. Famines become more and more frequent

occurrences. The peasant finds himself completely helpless in the face of epidemics and various kinds of elemental misfortunes. Wide masses of the peasantry are thrown out of the process of production; they have no chances of finding work in the towns and rarely find work in the village, where they develop into miserable coolies.

This unfortunate position of the peasantry denotes at the same time a crisis in the internal market for industry, which in its turn represents a powerful obstacle to the capitalist development of the country. Not only the national bourgeoisie of India, China, Egypt, etc., but also imperialism itself is sensible of this peasant misery as an obstacle in the path of the expansion of their exploitation; but the economic and political interests of both of them are so closely bound up with large ownership, as also with